

# VOTING RIGHTS GUIDE

FOR DC RESIDENTS

WITH DISABILITIES



Disability Rights DC at University Legal  
Services

220 I Street NE #130

Washington, DC 20002



Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services (DRDC) is the federally-mandated Protection and Advocacy Program for people with disabilities in DC.

DRDC is a private, non-profit organization and is not affiliated with the DC Board of Elections or any other DC government agency.

DRDC's Protection and Advocacy Program for Voter Access (PAVA) advocates on behalf of people with disabilities to ensure their full participation in all aspects of the DC electoral process including registering to vote, accessing vote centers, and casting ballots.

For more information or to request additional copies of this booklet, please contact:

**Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services**

220 I Street NE, Suite 130

Washington, DC 20002

202-547-0198 (voice)

202-547-2657 (TTY)

[www.uls-dc.org](http://www.uls-dc.org)

# Introduction

## Why Vote?

Voting is an important right under the U.S. Constitution, Federal, and DC laws. DC's Mayor and Council members, Senators, the U.S. President, and others are chosen by voters like you.

## Voting Rights for People with Disabilities

**People with all disabilities CAN vote!** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) are federal laws that require the DC government to have voting and elections at places that are accessible to people with disabilities.

Having a disability or receiving supports and services because of a disability does NOT disqualify you from voting. You CAN vote if you live in a nursing home, group home, shelter, hospital, jail, prison, or other facility.



*Photo of a person in a wheelchair entering a vote center through a door with an accessible entry symbol.*

## Your Right to Vote in DC

If you are a DC resident and at least 17 years old,\* you can vote UNLESS:

- You are not a U.S. Citizen\*\*;
- You have not lived in DC at least 30 days just before election day\*\*\*;
- You plan to vote in another state, territory, or country;
- A judge found that you are not capable of voting.

All eligible DC residents can vote while in jail or prison, regardless of your conviction – even if you have been convicted of a felony.

The DC Board of Elections controls voter registration (sign-up) and the way we vote.

\*You may vote in a primary election if you are at least 17 years old and you will be at least 18 years old by the next general election. You may vote in a general election or special election if you are at least 18 years old.

\*\*DC residents who are not U.S. citizens can still vote in DC local elections for the offices of Mayor, Chairman and Members of the Council, Attorney General, Members of the State Board of Education, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners, and for elections on any ballot questions.

\*\*\*If you are in jail or prison, you may not vote if you had not lived in DC for at least 30 days prior to being in jail or prison.

# Voter Registration & Pre-Registration

If you want to vote, you must be at least 17 years old and register with the DC Board of Elections.

If you are at least age 16, you can pre-register to vote. Pre-registering adds your name to the voter list so you will be ready to vote when you turn 17.

After you are registered to vote, the Board of Elections will mail you a voter registration card, though you do not need to bring this card with you to vote.

## Registering for the Primary Election

A primary election is for each political party (Democratic, Republican, Statehood Green) to choose a candidate for the general election.

To vote in a primary election, you must be registered with the political party holding the primary (for example: Democratic, Republican, Statehood Green) before the date of the primary (at least 21 days prior to the election unless you are registering for the first time). If you do not select one of these major parties, you will be registered as an “Independent” and will not be able to vote for a candidate in any primary election.

## *How do I register to vote?*

To register to vote, you must complete a Voter Registration Application and submit it to the DC Board of Elections. You can submit the form online, via fax or email, or by mailing it to or dropping it off at the BOE office. When you submit the form, you will also need to provide documentation confirming your name and address (discussed further in the next section).

## Online

To complete the online form, you will need to draw a signature or mark. A typed signature is not allowed. You will also need to upload a copy of your ID or other proof of name and address.

- For U.S. citizens, fill out and submit the form at [https://vr.dcboe.org/213324797239968?agency\\_code=12](https://vr.dcboe.org/213324797239968?agency_code=12).
- For non-U.S. citizens, fill out and submit the form at <https://vr.dcboe.org/240076291295963>.

## Fax/Email/Mail/In-Person

Print out a copy of the registration form and submit your application.

- For U.S. citizens, fill out and sign the form available at <https://dcboe.org/voters/register-to-vote/register-update-voter-registration>.
- For non-U.S. citizens, fill out and sign the form titled “Non-U.S. Citizen Resident Application,” available at <https://dcboe.org/voters/register-to-vote/non-citizen>.

Make a copy of your ID or other proof of name and address and submit it with your registration application form to:

### **DC Board of Elections**

**1015 Half Street, SE – Suite 750**

**Washington, DC 20003**



**Phone: (202) 727-2525**

**Fax: (202) 347-2648**

**Email: [DCRegistrations@dcboe.org](mailto:DCRegistrations@dcboe.org)**

**Hours: 8:15am to 4:45pm, Monday through Friday**

Call the DC Board of Elections for the registration form or for more information.

If you are Deaf, you can use DC Relay by dialing 711 or the numbers below:

**TTY (Text Telephone): 800-643-3768**

**STS (Speech to Speech): 800-898-0740**

**Spanish TTY: 800-546-7111**

**Spanish Voice: 800-546-5111**

### ***What kind of documentation is necessary to register to vote?***

You must provide proof of your name and address when you register to vote. This proof of name and DC address is the only ID required for you to register and vote. You can demonstrate this by giving ONE of these showing your name and address to the Board of Elections:

- A government-issued ID, or
- A Pepco, gas, water, cable, internet, or phone bill, or
- A bank statement, or
- A paycheck stub or lease or rental agreement, or
- A letter from a shelter where you stay, or
- A tuition or housing bill from a DC college or university issued for the current academic or housing term, or
- Any other government-issued document, other than one from the Board of Elections.

Bills, bank, or other statements must be dated no more than 90 days before your registration application.

### ***When should I register to vote?***

The deadlines for voter registration change, depending on the dates of elections.

The law allows you to register to vote by submitting the registration form to the Board of Elections at least 21 days before the official election day. If you miss that deadline, you can register in person on the same day you vote at a vote center. Bring your proof of name and address when you vote. The poll worker will give you the ballot to vote. If you do not have proof of your name and address when you vote, you must give it to the Board of Elections within two days after the election for your ballot to be counted.

### ***How do I register to vote if I am in jail or prison?***

You can still register to vote if you are in jail or prison, but there are some special considerations.

If you are in DC Department of Corrections' (DOC) care or custody, DOC must register you to vote if you want to register. Voter registration information is available on your housing unit. You can ask for help from the DOC Voting Coordinator to complete your voter registration application.

#### The Registration Application Form

You must include on line 3 of your voter registration application your full legal name in the provided boxes, even if this is different from the name under which you are incarcerated. For example, "Jonathan Moore (aka John Moor)."

You must include on line 4 of the registration application your DC home address to register to vote. Your DC home address is:

- **The address where you lived prior to being in jail or prison, or**
- **Your new DC address if your family has moved, or**
- **The address of a DC shelter where you stayed if you were unhoused prior to incarceration, or**
- **A DC address where you will be returning.**

You must include on line 5 your jail or prison ID number and the mailing

address of your correctional facility to receive your ballot (for example: “(12345-007) USP Marion P.O. BOX 1000 Marion, IL 62959”).

Include on line 8 your DMV ID number or the last four numbers of your social security number if you have one. If you have neither, check box 8A.

### Other Considerations

If you transfer to a different facility or are released, you must fill out another registration application (or you can go to a vote center if you are released) to receive your ballot.

Copies of DC’s Voter Registration Application and postage paid return envelopes can also be requested from the Reentry Affairs Coordinators or your Unit Team at federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) facilities.

Proof of name and DC address is **not required** for incarcerated DC residents if your jail or prison ID number and the last four digits of your social security number are included on the registration application form. If BOE cannot verify your name and address, your ballot will include instructions on providing prison identification.

### ***How can I check if I am registered to vote or make changes to my registration?***

To confirm that you are registered to vote, you can call the Board of Elections at (202) 727-2525 or check their website at <https://apps.dcboe.org/VRS>.

To update your registration with a new name, address, or political party, you may call the Board of Elections for an address change form or update your information online at <https://dcboe.org/voters/register-to-vote/register-update-voter-registration>. Non-citizens may update your registration online at <https://dcboe.org/voters/register-to-vote/non-citizen>.

# Ranked Choice Voting

**Starting with the 2026 Primary Election, your ballot will look different.** This is because DC will start using Ranked Choice Voting (RCV).

## *What is ranked choice voting?*

RCV is a new way to vote. Instead of voting for only one candidate, you can rank candidates in order of preference.

- Your favorite candidate should be picked as your first choice,
- Your second-favorite candidate should be picked as your second choice, and
- Continue if you want to pick up to your fifth choice.

You can rank up to five candidates per category.

## *Do I have to rank five candidates?*

No. You do not have to rank all five available candidates. You can:

- Rank only one candidate, or
- Rank some candidates, or
- Rank up to five of the available candidates.

If you want to vote for only one candidate, just pick that candidate as your first choice and do not vote for any other candidates. If you want to vote for fewer than five candidates, only rank the number of candidates you want to vote for.

## *Important tips*

- Choose only one candidate for each column (1st choice, 2nd choice, etc.).
- Do not rank the same candidate more than once.
- You should not skip rankings (for example, rank first and third, but skip second).

### ***How are ranked choice votes counted?***

After all ballots are counted, if a candidate has more than half of all first-choice votes, that candidate wins the election. If no candidate has enough votes, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and the voters that ranked that candidate first have their vote counted for their second choice. The results are counted again to see if a candidate has more than half of the first-choice votes. If there is still no candidate with enough votes, the process repeats itself until one candidate receives enough votes.

#### **EXAMPLE**

Say a group of people is deciding what to have for dinner. 40% of people vote for pizza, 25% of people vote for burgers, and the remaining 35% of people vote for salads. Based on which food has the most votes, the group would have pizza for dinner, even though only 40% of the group voted for pizza.

Now let's imagine the group used ranked choice voting. Because burgers had the least percentage of the votes, those who voted for burgers now have their second choice counted. When the results are counted now, 55% of the group vote for salads and 45% of the group vote for pizza. So, the group would have salad for dinner.

### ***Questions about RCV?***

Visit <https://www.dcboe.org/rcv> to learn more and to find sample and practice ballots.

# How to Vote

## *How do I vote?*

There are many ways you can choose to vote, including in-person, curbside, by mail, or by accessible remote ballot.

### **1. In-Person at a Vote Center**

The DC Board of Elections must let you vote inside a vote center in private (meaning you do not have to tell anyone how you voted). All vote centers should have ramps or flat entries for you to use.

**You do NOT need to show an ID to vote on election day. You also do not need to show your voter registration card.**

Inside the vote center, you can vote on a machine or use a paper ballot. There are signs showing the ballot (list of people running for elections) to look at before you vote. The voting machines use touch screens and audio (for people who are blind or have limited vision).

If you need help to vote in person, you can bring anyone with you into the vote center to help you vote. If you do not understand English, you can get the ballot and instructions in your language in some parts of DC. (You can call the Board of Elections' Language Access services at 202-727-2525 for free interpreter assistance and additional information in your language.) If you received your ballot by mail and need help completing it, you can ask for help from anyone of your choosing, including a poll worker at any vote center.

### **2. Curbside**

You can vote curbside (from your car or at the sidewalk curb) in front of some vote centers. Check the Board of Elections' website for curbside voting locations or call the Board of Elections. If you choose to vote this

way, a poll worker will give you a paper ballot to fill out and return right away.

### **3. Ballot by Mail or Mail Ballot Drop Box**

You can vote by mail if you want or need to vote by mail. The Board of Elections will automatically mail your ballot to you if you are registered. You do not need to ask for a mail-in ballot from the Board of Elections unless you will be away from your registered mailing address during the election. To request a mail-in ballot you can:

- Email your request to [DCabsentee@dcboe.org](mailto:DCabsentee@dcboe.org), or
- Ask for a request form online at <https://vr.dcboe.org/213115759199060>, or
- Fax a request to the Board of Elections at 202-347-2648.

You must fill out the ballot and mail it or bring it to the Board of Elections (or any vote center or ballot drop box) by 8:00pm on election day. If you mail your ballot, you must sign the official ballot envelope, your ballot must be mailed in this envelope and postmarked on or before election day, and the Board of Elections must *receive* it no later than 10 days after election day. If you do not get your ballot by mail, you can still vote in person at a vote center.

### **4. Accessible Remote Ballot**

Voters with disabilities have the option to vote remotely using an accessible remote ballot (ARB). ARB is an electronic ballot that allows you to electronically read and mark your ballot. In 2022, DC passed the Election Modernization Amendments Act that allows for ARB ballots to be returned electronically. ARB is compatible with all major screen readers (JAWS, etc.), tactile switches, closed captioning, and audio-enabled systems. You will need access to a computer with internet access and an email address.

You must ask for an ARB from the Board of Elections. To ask for an

ARB you can call the ADA Coordinator at 202-727-5411 or email your ARB Marking System Request form to [ogc@dcboe.org](mailto:ogc@dcboe.org). The ARB request form is available online at [https://www.dcboe.org/voters/accessible-voting/accessible-remote-ballot-\(arb\)-marking-system](https://www.dcboe.org/voters/accessible-voting/accessible-remote-ballot-(arb)-marking-system).

The Board of Elections will email you a link to your remote ballot. You must fill out the ballot online and return it to the Board of Elections (either by printing the ballot and delivering it to any vote center or ballot drop box or sending it back electronically through the online portal) by 8:00pm on election day. If you mail it, you must sign the official ballot envelope mailed separately, your ballot must be mailed in this envelope and postmarked on or before election day, and the Board of Elections must *receive* it no later than 10 days after election day.

### ***When can I vote?***

There are two official dates for elections: one for the primary elections (in June) and one for general elections (in November). The DC Council sets the official date for the primary elections. **The next primary election will be June 16, 2026.** The general election is always on the first Tuesday in November. **The next general election will be November 3, 2026.**

Early voting starts about two weeks before the official election day. You can either vote early or on election day.

### ***Where can I vote?***

There are vote centers in each Ward of DC for “early voting.” You can vote at any of these early voting places: <https://dcboe.org/elections/2026-elections>.

On election day, you may vote at any vote center in the District. Find vote center locations on the Board of Elections’ website: <https://dcboe.org/elections/2026-elections>. The closest vote center to your home address is listed on your voter registration card.

# Disability-Based Complaints and Problems

## *Accommodations (Changes) for Voters with Disabilities*

You may need a change in your voting place or the way you vote because of your disability. These changes are called accommodations. Some examples are:

- Opening the door to the vote center,
- Giving you a magnifying glass to help you read the ballot or voting directions,
- Using an audio headset that reads out the information on the voting machine and tells you what to do to vote,
- Allowing you to bring anyone you choose into the vote center with you to help you vote.

You can ask anyone at your vote center or at DC Board of Elections if you need accommodations (changes) in voting because of your disability. You can request these accommodations (changes) in the voting process at any time.

## *Types of Problems*

People with disabilities may face voting access problems at vote centers such as:

- Getting into the vote center,
- Not having audio headphones to use the voting machine,
- Not having magnifying glasses to see the ballots,
- Lack of space around voting machines.

If your vote center is not accessible (for example – if it has steps you cannot climb or heavy, closed doors you cannot open), you may submit a complaint.



*Photo of man in wheelchair at closed double doors.*

### ***How to File Complaints***

If you cannot access (enter) your vote center, use the voting machine or paper ballot, or have other problems voting, you can file a complaint in writing or by calling the Board of Elections. You can also call DRDC at 202-547-0198.

During the elections (early voting or election day), you can contact the Board of Elections or DRDC to report access problems.

After election day, you can file a complaint to the Board of Elections in writing or by calling the Board or DRDC. If the Board does not resolve your complaint, you can appeal through the Office of Administrative Hearings.

## ***Election Day Jobs***

The Board of Elections hires people to work on election day in different jobs including Poll Workers, Voter Assistance Clerks, ADA Compliance Assistants, and Site Coordinators. These jobs are open to everyone including people with disabilities. Here is a link to the FAQs about election day jobs: <https://dcboe.org/faqs/election-workers>.

To qualify for election day jobs, you must:

- Be a DC resident\* (Site Coordinators must also be registered voters), and
- Be at least 16 years old, and
- Attend or have graduated from a public or private secondary school or an institution of higher education (for Election Workers only), and
- Complete at least four hours of training before each election.

\*Except for DC government employees.

People with disabilities are not required to pass test(s) or drive or walk to qualify for these positions.

How to apply: Fill out an application on the Board of Elections' website at: <https://dcboe.org/election-workers/election-worker-applications> or go to the Board of Elections' office or call them to get an application.

## ***DRDC's Role***

Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services (DRDC) urges the Board of Elections to make all vote centers and ballots accessible to all DC voters with disabilities by:

- Visiting vote centers to check on accessibility;
- Reporting access problems to the Board of Elections;
- Recommending improved access such as opening school building doors.

DRDC also helps people with complaints regarding voter registration and voting access on and after election day.

### ***Questions?***

If you have questions or complaints about voting access, please contact DRDC at 202-547-0198 (voice) or 202-547-2657 (TTY). DRDC's website has a section about voters' rights advocacy: [www.uls-dc.org](http://www.uls-dc.org).